PARIS, Leslie — *Children's Nature: The Rise of the American Summer Camp*. New York: New York University Press, 2008. Pp. 364.

Readers of Leslie Paris's *Children's Nature* should be warned — this book may bring on a flood of wistful or painful memories of one's own experiences — or lack thereof — at summer camp. Although Paris's study ends in 1940, before many of today's adults attended camp, some former campers will no doubt smile at the words that open the book, of a young boy asked if he had enjoyed his vacation: "I wish I were to begin the summer all over again tomorrow A.M." If *Children's Nature* produces nostalgia, however, it also critiques it as one of the many cultural consequences of the camping movement. Paris explores the tension between modernity and tradition that shaped the camping industry and demonstrates how summer camps, campers, and camp leaders both reflected and shaped American culture in crucial ways, leaving a complex legacy of positive and negative consequences.

Children's Nature comprises seven chapters in two parts. The first four chapters focus on the expansion of the camping industry in the late nineteenth century, explore how campers' families chose their camps, and reveal campers' diverse experiences. The last three chapters examine how camp leaders and campers responded to and influenced the issues of their day, including commercialism, race politics, and parenting. Paris's sources include camp directors' memoirs and publications, campers' diaries, letters, and testimonials, and records from hundreds of camps located mainly in the Northeastern United States. Her study includes private and charity-run camps, religious camps, single-sex and co-ed camps, racially segregated camps, and organizational camps. From such a broad and deep pool of diverse resources, Paris weaves a well-focused analysis of the cultural consequences of children's forays into the woods.

Camps may have been located in "the wilderness," but culturally they were anything but isolated. Paris argues the camp movement developed alongside the late-nineteenth-century critique of urbanization and Americans' preoccupation with a largely imagined rural pioneering past. Camping was idealized as an "antidote to city life" for everyone, not just for young people (p. 19). Paris demonstrates how camp leaders reconciled their anti-modernist appreciation of nature with emerging theories about children's development. For example, when Ernest Balch established Camp Chocorua on the shores of New Hampshire's Lake Squam in the 1880s, he envisioned a rugged retreat where boys would experience the democratizing and invigorating effects of pioneer life. At the same time, his campers' days were strictly regimented and included activities designed to teach them about capitalism, credit, and the value of work (p. 34). Paris examines how, throughout the twentieth century, camp leaders like Balch struggled to combine the image of "authentic" wilderness camping with parents' requests for useful skills, gender-appropriate activities, and modern amenities (like indoor plumbing). Camps were purposefully separated from modern life, and yet, Paris reveals, they were the products and the perpetuators of contemporary cultural ideas.

Children's Nature is strongest when it analyses the ritual and routine of daily camp life. Paris mines the minute details of camp experience to demonstrate how camp directors fashioned "camp community" (p. 96). While Paris argues that camps and campers were divided along religious, ethnic, gender, and class lines, she also demonstrates persuasively how camp activities often muted these differences. The journey to camp, the potential of homesickness, the relationship between new and returning campers, the nicknames, the tent- or bunkmates, the badges or medals for achievements, the pageants and campfire songs, and the memories at summer's end — these common experiences became part of a mass camp culture. As the number and size of camps grew over the first half of the twentieth century, children from diverse backgrounds had more and more similar experiences on their summer vacations.

Paris's argument that children exerted extraordinary agency at camp is less persuasive. Camp was a child-dominated space where children socialized mostly with others their own age. Paris claims that the age hierarchy of most camps allowed older children a degree of power and opportunity they did not experience at home or at school. However, there is little evidence to suggest that children felt more powerful at camp than at home. For example, Paris offers "Campers' Days," when counsellors and campers switched roles for a day, as proof that age was a "central category of difference" in most camps (p. 111). She overlooks how campers' often wild behaviour on these rare occasions suggests that they may have felt constrained by their daily, adult-devised schedule. Campers might have been able to choose between a range of activities during a given time period — between baseball or basketball before lunch, for example. Nevertheless, as Paris notes, at most camps young people moved from bugle call to breakfast to swimming lessons on a predictable schedule (p. 114). Even "free time" was pencilled in and adult-supervised. Children might express their displeasure by rebelling against particular activities or counsellors, but *Children's Nature* does not demonstrate that these actions affected a camp's agenda in any substantial way. It seems campers were more likely to modify their behaviour to suit camp life, as in the case of the homesick boy who "managed, through the tears" to write a letter home saying how much fun he was having at Camp Dudley (p. 136). Campers' sense of freedom likely came more from the camp's natural setting and from their excitement at trying new and unusual activities like canoeing than from their actual ability to control their environment.

Paris also argues campers exercised power as consumers, claiming camp directors had to mind children's desires or risk losing their parents' business. We must examine closely any claims that children were consumers in their own right. While camp directors certainly had children's interests at heart, Paris's evidence suggests they were most concerned with parents' desires and targeted parents with advertisements promising to improve their children's health, character, and disposition at camp (p. 76). Children likely had a say in what camp they attended, but camps ultimately had to pass parents' scrutiny. Suggestions that children were participating in family purchasing decisions are difficult to prove. Furthermore, sociologist Dan Cook has argued that marketers started using children's ability to voice

their opinions and make choices to sell products as early as the interwar years (see Cook's article "Kiddie Capitalism" in the December 5, 2001 issue of *PopPolitics.com*). Children's supposed "agency" as consumers (and adults' desire to acknowledge their free will) made them useful product mouthpieces. To what extent did camp materials encourage children to convince their parents to allow them to attend a particular camp? The camping industry was certainly part of an increasingly commercialized children's culture, and Paris's study would have profited from a closer examination of the limits of children's consumer authority.

These are minor deficiencies in an otherwise engaging and thoroughly researched study. *Children's Nature* will appeal equally to scholars of childhood, leisure, culture, and twentieth-century America. Paris places children's experiences, alongside adults' concerns about children's leisure time, at the centre of American cultural change, making *Children's Nature* a model for other historians of childhood and youth to follow.

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TALBOT, Robert J. — *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties: An Intellectual & Political Biography of Alexander Morris.* Saskatoon: Purich Publishing Limited, 2009. Pp. 223.

In *Negotiating the Numbered Treaties*, Robert Talbot paints a complex picture of the person who negotiated treaties on behalf of the Crown — Alexander Morris. According to Talbot, Morris is a rare man in Canadian history who, during the negotiation of several of the historic numbered treaties, came to understand and adopt the perspective of the Indian negotiators. Talbot's thesis is that Morris developed an understanding of treaty as the basis of a timeless and sacred reciprocal relationship between the Indian people and the Crown, rather than seeing treaty as the means to realize the colonial aspirations of the Crown in British North America. However, the thesis is not argued persuasively. The lack of persuasion, nevertheless, does not make the book an uninteresting read; nor does it mean the book suffers from a lack of scholarship. It simply means that the work does not provide enough evidence to argue that Morris was such a unique character within the Canada-Aboriginal relationship of the later nineteenth century.

Talbot clearly articulates that he is endeavouring to explore a middle ground between the idea that treaty was a process entirely made up of sharp dealings on the part of the Crown, in which the Indians did not comprehend the implications, and the more recent scholarly argument that the Indians were the ones who really understood the sacred intent of treaty, which was to forge a relationship with the Crown that would fundamentally ensure that both parties prospered into the future. Talbot's thesis occupies a conceptual space between George Stanley's